

Module 4 Fact Sheet: Access a DFV Service

Module 4

This fact sheet provides a brief overview of what happens when you access a DFV service to make a warm referral with women experiencing domestic and family violence. It is important to be aware that responses will differ **depending on the level of risk** the woman is experiencing, and these points are of a general nature. **The DFV specialist service will work with each woman to determine appropriate support.**

Initial contact

The disability worker may call or email the DFV service with the referral information that has been consented to by the woman.

The more detailed the referral, the less re-traumatising it will be for the woman.

The DFV worker will speak with women directly to undergo a brief intake process that will screen for specific risk factors around the DFV and confirm their consent.

This will include:

- The DFV worker will begin a safety plan, depending on the level of risk.
- A time and place will be arranged to complete a thorough risk assessment and safety plan. This could be over the phone; via an online platform such as Zoom or Teams or face to face at the DFV service.
- Information about safe times and methods to contact the client will be discussed and are very important.

Tip

If the matter is high risk, the DFV service will coordinate necessary services and actions to enhance immediate safety.

Risk Assessment

Women are consulted and given agency of their interaction with the service through the whole process.

The DFV worker will complete a thorough risk assessment in consultation with the woman. This will include:

- Making appropriate referrals.
- Developing a safety plan.
- Determining follow up arrangements.

Tip

Safety planning must be done by the DFV service or someone with appropriate skills to do so.

Tip

These DFV responses will depend on the urgency and level of risk in the situation. Safety always takes priority.

Disability worker engagement

Ongoing contact between the disability worker and the DFV service is agreed, and plans explored for the safety of women.

The woman may have ongoing involvement with the DFV service, and the disability worker may support this process if the woman wishes. This may include:

- Checking for understanding of the safety plan.
- Providing a point of contact for the DFV service when they need to contact the woman.
- Supporting safety plan implementation, for example, supporting the woman to and from appointments or escorting her to the police or courts etc.

Tip

Raise concerns and ask questions if you need to. Mix ups can put women at risk.

Ongoing support

Disability workers will continue to provide usual supports as the safety plan is implemented.

As the safety plan is implemented and the DFV service continues to support the woman it is important to also be aware of the safety of the woman and the disability worker. This may include:

- Working with your own organisation to determine alternative strategies to ensure your own safety while supporting the woman if it is unsafe.
- Integrating relevant aspects of the safety plan into your work with the woman.

Advocacy

Disability workers and advocates may play an important role in working with the DFV service.

If the woman does not feel confident or have capacity to speak with the DFV service or other relevant agencies herself, advocacy may be required. This may include:

- Speaking with the DFV service on her behalf.
- Speaking with other services and advocates on her behalf.

Tip

Advocacy would be arranged and agreed to in the initial appointment but could also be re-negotiated as required.

Collaboration

Disability workers may play a crucial role in working with the DFV service and others to ensure the woman's safety.

DFV services are keen to work from a collaborative perspective and the disability worker will play an important role helping to ensure the woman continues to get all the services that she needs while working through the DFV responses. This may include:

- Providing advice and support to assist communication between the woman and the DFV service.
- Providing advice about specific disability requirements or services.
- Providing relevant DFV information about the perpetrator's behaviours or changes in perpetrators/victims circumstances.